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SPEECH

OF THE

Alexander
REV. DR. DUFF, 1806-1878

AT THE ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

Church of Scotland's Foreign Missions,

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S P E E C H.

The Reverend Gentleman, in rising to propose the third Resolution, was received by the audience with loud cheers. First of all he proceeded at some length to detail, on the authority of a recent Government Report, some of the cruelties of Indian superstition. He significantly pointed to the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, as the primary instrument to be employed in regenerating a guilty world; adding that for India not sixty or a hundred, but sixty or a hundred thousand teachers and preachers were wanted, and that in order to raise such a number, Christian schools and colleges are begun to be established. He emphatically proclaimed our simple, absolute dependence on the influences of the Holy Spirit to render all the instituted means of grace efficacious. He illustrated the potency of sound, useful knowledge in demolishing the systems of Hinduism, and pointed out the necessity of supplying the higher knowledge of Christianity. To prevent mistakes, he endeavoured to show how the two kinds of knowledge ought ever to be combined. Most true it is, said he, that I for one have advocated with all the strenuousness of which my nature is capable, the introduction into India of the largest range of sound European knowledge in every imaginable department, and that too for reasons which in this very hall I formerly stated at large, and which have proved more than satisfying to all really enlightened and reflecting minds, but which on that very account it is wholly unnecessary for the present to recapitulate. Be it remembered, however, that in order to secure all the great and important uses and advantages of knowledge, apart from its manifold abuses and disadvantages, I at the same time laboured to demonstrate, that it should not only be accompanied with, but every where, both at home and abroad, actually based on a valid substratum of religious truth, the only sound religious truth in the world, that is, Christianity. (Great cheers.) How often do we now-a-days hear of the streams of this knowledge flowing through the land, and fertilizing the intellects of the people into a rich harvest of intelligence? Yea, after the manner and amplitude of Oriental hyperbole, how often do we hear this knowledge compared to a mighty ocean that has already begun, and is finally destined to encompass the whole world of intellectual being? Well, granting for a moment to the adorers of knowledge their very hearts' desire, may we not for their special edification push their own parallel into a few particu-

lars? Modern knowledge, say they, is like the great ocean, seen to roll its waters on every shore! What then!—and if, like the great ocean, it has its serviceable tides, may it not have its destructive inundations too? (Cheers.) If, like the great ocean, it has depths profound, may it not have its straits and shallows too? (Cheers.) If, like the great ocean, it has its roads and havens, may it not have its rocks and quicksands too? (Cheers.) If, like the great ocean, it has its gales and gentle breezes, may it not have its storms and tempests too? (Great cheers.) If then, by some incontrollable necessity the two kinds of knowledge, secular and sacred, were to be separated by an impassable gulf; if, by the same incontrollable necessity, we were left no alternative but to adopt one or other, but only one; and if, to decide our preference and election, the question were peremptorily put, Which of the two do you choose? may I not venture to affirm, in the name of this great audience, that in such a peculiar and extreme case, there is not a real *heart-Christian* in the British empire that would hesitate for a moment to reply, I choose that knowledge, that blessed knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, which is contained in the Bible, in preference to all the secular knowledge in the world? (Loud cheers.) Never, perhaps, has the immeasurable superiority of the latter been more strikingly displayed, than by Cowper, in those beautiful lines wherein he contrasts the condition and prospects of the poor, but pious English cottager, that sat

“ At her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her ‘ little store,’ ”

with the condition and prospects of the celebrated French infidel Voltaire.

“ She knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
Truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew,
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes,
Her title to a treasure in the skies.
Oh, happy peasant! oh, unhappy bard!
His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward.
He, praised perhaps for ages yet to come,
She never heard of half a mile from home:
He lost in error his vain heart prefers,
She safe in the simplicity of hers.” (Cheers.)

This graphic allusion of Cowper to “ the brilliant Frenchman,” in connexion with the present subject, leads us directly and by a natural association of ideas, to notice the most terrible exemplifications of the tendency and effects of knowledge without religion, recorded in the annals of all time. Some of the original founders of the modern French philosophy, about the middle of last century, were, beyond all debate, in their own sense of the term, philanthropists. Was not

theirs a system, which, according to their calculations, was to regenerate the world without the aid of religion at all? Before their system, was not barbarism every where to give place to civilization—preponderant rights to equality—and tyranny to liberty? Was not truth, so long buried beneath the rubbish of ages of ignorance and error, to experience a species of resurrection? Was not reason, so long befooled by prejudice and superstition, to be restored to her rightful ascendancy in the intellectual firmament? In a word, was not the new philosophy to construct an altar whence the flames were expected to ascend, and spread, and brighten, till they poured the stream of illumination round the globe. Magnificent rising sun of promise! And doomed how ingloriously to set in darkness! Alas! the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? Not one who does, but sees it clearly reflected in the spotless mirror of God's own word. (Hear, hear.) And the Encyclopædists and Economists, and the whole body of fraternizing illuminati of France, in casting that eternal word in derision away from them, did thereby cast away the only lamp that would have guided them into the labyrinth of the heart's natural perverseness. (Hear, hear.) Who then need wonder that, wholly ignorant as they were of the real nature of the disease, they should have blundered fatally in prescribing a remedy? And has not the disastrous issue accordingly shown, that, instead of kindling a light that might illuminate the world, they were only fanning a flame that was soon to envelop it in a universal conflagration? (Loud cheers.) Ah! if one of the better-intentioned of the earlier fathers of the new philosophy had only arisen from the grave, and alighted in the vale of Paris during the midnight gloom of the reign of terror; if there he had, in personified forms, met his own philosophy metamorphosed into undisguised Atheism, openly proclaiming there was no God, and that death was an eternal sleep; and along with Atheism, her legitimate offspring, savage anarchy wielding his tremendous scimitar fresh reeking with the blood of thousands of unhappy victims, slaughtered in the name of humanity; ah! methinks he would start back as aghast at the hideous aspect of his own double progeny, as the archangel, fallen from the shapeless monsters he encountered at the gates of Pandemonium! (Great applause.) And, like the thunder-stricken seraph, he might thus break silence:—

“ Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,
 So strange thine outcry, and thy words so strange!
 What thing art thou thus double formed? and why,
 In this infernal vale first met, thou call'd'st
 Me Father, and that phantom call'dst my Son?
 I know thee not, and never saw till now
 Sight more detestable than him and thee.” (Cheers.)

To whom his own darling philosophy, now transformed into naked, hideous Atheism, thus replies :—

“ Hast thou forgot me, then, and do I seem
 Now in thine eye so foul ? once deemed so fair,
 * * * when at the Assembly * * * *
 * * * * with thee combined
 In bold conspiracy against heaven’s King. (Loud cheers.)
 Likest to thee in shape and countenance bright,
 When, shining heavenly fair, a goddess arm’d,
 Out of thy head I sprung.”

Instantly demon Anarchy, Atheism’s natural child, stands forth,—

“ Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
 With earthquake shock he falls upon the hapless father.”

And, more successful in the onslaught than his pandemonium prototype, he drags him quivering to the guillotine, and speedily holds up his severed head to the gaze of a frenzied multitude, an everlasting monument of the triumph of philosophy without religion—of the golden age of equal rights—of the halcyon reign of unbounded liberty ! (Tremendous cheers.) With views and feelings like these on the subject of “ knowledge without religion,” is it probable, is it possible, is it even conceivable, that we should ever have cherished the fancies and the visions, the schemes and the prospects of its adoring worshippers ? For reasons which have more than satisfied many of the wisest and most devoted Christians in this land, we have, on the one hand, with unabated earnestness, advocated the introduction into India of sound knowledge in its largest, widest, most unlimited sense, and that too in close and immediate connexion with the great missionary enterprize. But, on the other hand, we protest and declare, by the venerated shades of the German Luthers and Melancthons (cheers), by the venerated shades of your English Wycliffs and Cranmers (cheers), by the venerated shades of our Scottish Knoxes and Melvilles (loud cheers), we protest and declare that, never, never, would we, in deference to the clamours of any anti-christian faction in Britain or in India (deafening cheers), consent to the diffusion of knowledge in connexion with the missionary enterprize, except in close, intimate, and inseparable alliance with that far higher and sublimer knowledge of the only true religion which is contained in the Bible, the whole Bible, the un mutilated Bible, and nothing but the Bible ! (Immense applause, which lasted for several minutes.) The Reverend Gentleman next adverted at some length to the proceedings of the Government Committee of Public Instruction in India. They have twenty-seven Institutions, in which European science and literature are taught, but not religion. They have ordered

libraries of books from England, for the use of these Institutions. Some of the books are excellent ; others are useless, such as *Cinderella*, *Tom Thumb*, *Little Red Riding-hood*, the *Devil on two Sticks*, &c. ; and others positively pernicious, as some of Byron's works, Fielding and Smollett's Novels, Hume's Essays, in which the very foundations of Christianity are attempted to be undermined. What a field for the labours of Bible Societies, and religious book and Tract Societies ! He next proceeded to give some very interesting details respecting the progress and prospects of the Church of Scotland's Indian Missions—details, some of which produced a very great impression on the audience. He then proposed to consider the second part of the Motion put into his hands, which referred to an increase of liberality and an increase of labourers. I shall, said he, at once proceed to the subject, by asking, as in the sight of the omniscient God, Can it be alleged or pretended that all Christians at present give what they really can ? Or, that all have gone forth to the field of labour who are really qualified ? I pause for a reply. But, if things greatly change not from what they are, I may pause for ever. Look at men's acts, and not at their words ; for I am weaned and disgusted into very loathing at "great swelling words," that boil and bubble into foam and froth on the bosom of an impetuous torrent of oratory and then burst into airy nothingness. (Cheers and laughter.) Look at men's acts, and not at their great swelling words, and tell me what language do they speak ? Is it in very deed a thing so mighty for one of your merchant princes to rise up on this platform, and proclaim his intense anxiety that contributions should be liberal, and then stimulate those around him by the noble example of embodying his irrepressible anxiety in the magnificent donation of 10*l.*, 20*l.*, or 50*l.* ! when, at the very moment, without curtailing any of the real necessities of life—without even abridging any one of its fictitious comforts or luxuries, he might readily consecrate his hundreds or thousands, to be restored more than a hundred-fold on the great day of final recompense ? (Hear, hear.) And call you this an act of such prodigious munificence that it must elicit the shouts and the pæans of an entranced multitude ? (Hear, hear.) Call you that an act of such thrilling disinterestedness that it must pierce into hearts otherwise hermetically sealed against the imploring cries of suffering humanity ? (Hear, hear.) Call you this an act of such self-sacrificing generosity that it must be registered for a memorial into the book of God's remembrance, with the same stamp of Divine approbation as that bestowed on the poor widow in the Gospel, who, though she gave but little, gave her all ? (Applause.) And is it in very deed a thing so mighty for a Christian pastor, whether

bishop, priest, or deacon, or any member of a Church, to abandon for a season his routine of duty, and once in the year to come up, either to regale, or be regaled, with the incense of human applause in this great metropolis,—the emporium of the world's commerce—the seat of the world's mightiest empire, and the general rendezvous of men and things unparalleled in all the world besides? (Hear, hear.) Is it a thing so mighty for any one of these to stand up on this platform, and call on assembled thousands to rise to their true elevation, and acquit themselves like men in the cause of Him who rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm? And, dismissing all ordinary forms and figures of speech as tame and inadequate, is it an act so heroic to stand on this platform, and break forth into apostrophes, that ring with the din of arms and shout of battle? And is it an act so heroic at the safe distance of ten thousand miles courageously to summon the gates of Pekin to lift up their heads, and its barricades and ramparts to rend asunder at the presence of the heralds of salvation? and, impersonifying the celestial empire herself, boldly invoke her to send up without delay her hundreds of millions to the house of the Lord, exalted above the hills, and place her Imperial crown on the head of Him on whose head shall be all the crowns of the earth, and the diadem of the universe? (Loud applause.) Or is it an act of spiritual prowess so mighty, for one who never joined in the conflict to stand up on this platform and rehearse the battles that have been fought in the missionary field, the victories that have been obtained, and the trophies that have been won? Is it an achievement of never-dying fame to burst into rapture at the unrivalled honour of those brave veterans that have already laid down their lives in storming the citadels of heathenism? Hark! here are a few blasts from a trumpet that has often pealed at our great anniversaries. The missionary's life? Ah! "an archangel would come down from the throne, if he might, and feel himself honoured to give up the felicities of heaven for a season for the toils of a missionary's life." The missionary's work? Ah! "the work of a minister at home, as compared with that of a missionary, is but as the lighting of a parish lamp, to the causing the sun to rise upon an empire that is yet in darkness." The missionary's grave? Ah! "the missionary's grave is far more honourable than the minister's pulpit." (Great applause.) After such outpourings of fervent zeal and burning admiration of valour, would ye not expect that the limits of a kingdom were too circumscribed for the range of spirits so chivalrous? Would ye not expect that intervening oceans and continents could oppose no barrier to their resistless career? Would ye not expect that, as chieftains at the head of a noble army,

numerous as the phalanxes that erewhile flew from tilt and tournament to glitter in the sunshine of the Holy Land, they should no more be heard of till they made known their presence by the terror of their power in shattering to atoms the towering walls of China, and hoisting in triumph the banners of the cross over the captured mosques of Araby and prostrate pagodas of India? Alas, alas! what shall we say when the thunder of heroism that reverberates so sublimely over our heads from year to year in Exeter Hall, is found in changeless succession to die away in fainter and yet fainter echoes among the luxurious mansions, the snug dwellings, and goodly parsonages of Old England? (Loud applause.) Listen to the high-sounding words of the mightiest of our anniversary thunderers on this platform, and would ye not vow that they were heroes with whom the post of honour was the post of danger? Look at the astounding contrast of their practice, and will not your cheeks redden with the crimson flush of shame, to find that they are cowards, with whom the post of honour is, after all, the post of safety? And is this the way to wake the long-slumbering spirit of devotedness throughout the land? Is this the kind of call that will arouse the dormant energies of a sluggish Church? Is this the kind of summons that will cause a rush of champions into the field of danger and of death? Is this the kind of example that will stimulate a thousand Gutzlaffs to brave the horrors of a barbarous shore? What will incite thousands of Martyns, and of Careys, and of Morisons, to arm themselves on the consecrated spots where these foremost warriors fell? I know not what the sentiments of this great audience may be on a subject so momentous: but as for myself, I cannot, at whatever risk of offence to friends, and of ribaldry from enemies—I cannot, without treason to my God and Saviour,—I cannot but give vent to the overpowering emotions of my own heart, when in the face of England, Scotland, and Ireland, I exclaim, “Oh that my head were waters, that mine eyes were a fountain of tears, that I could weep over the fatal, the disastrous inconsistencies, of many of the most renowned of the leaders of the people!” (Applause.) What, then, is to be done? When are the gigantic evils complained of to be efficiently remedied? Never, never, till the leading members of our Churches be shamed out of their lavish extravagance in conforming to the fashion of a world that is soon to pass away, and out of their close-fisted penuriousness as regards all claims that concern the eternal destinies of their fellows. Never, never, till the angels of our Churches, whether ordinary pastors or superintending bishops, be shamed out of their sloth, their treachery, and their cowardice. For rest assured, that people would get weary of the sound of the demand “Give, give,” that is

eternally reiterated in their ears, when those who make it so seldom give, or, what is the same thing, give in such scanty driblets, that it seems a mockery of their own expostulations, and of the sound of the command "Go, go," when those who make it, are themselves so seldom found willing to go! How, then, is the remedy to be effected? Not, believe me, by periodical showers of words, however copious, which fall like snow-flakes in the river,—a moment white, then gone for ever. No; but by thousands of deeds that shall cause the very scoffer to wonder, even if he should wonder and perish—deeds that shall enkindle into a blaze the smouldering embers of Christian love—deeds that shall revive the days of primitive devotedness, when men valiant for the truth despised earthly riches, and conquered through sufferings, not counting their lives dear unto the death. (Cheers.) Show me your wealthy citizen who makes a loud profession of the name of Christ come forth, not with niggardly hand doling out a miserable paltry pittance from his superabounding storehouse; show me him ready to give proof of the sincerity of his profession by casting down the half of his goods at the feet of Jesus for the poor and perishing; and if there remain other claims uncanceled from former negligence, ready to requite the obligation fourfold. Show me him striving to emulate the Hebrew monarch, who burned with desire to build a temple to Jehovah, the God of Israel, and who, in the full ardour of his zeal, and the rushing of the tide of gratitude, at once proceeded from desire to action. And he opened his ample treasury, and poured forth of its gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and onyx-stones, and glittering stones, and all manner of precious stones, to be employed in erecting and adorning the goodly edifice. And, fired with the forthputting of his own generosity, and borne away with the glare of his own holy enthusiasm, he communicated the sacred impulse to the hosts of his people when, with the confident boldness of one who had himself made ample sacrifices, he cried out in their hearing, "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" And may I not now appeal to you as men and as Christians, whether self-sacrificing examples of this description would not do a hundred times more to melt down the frozen hearts of an age of superficial, fashionable Evangelism, than a thousand sermons in our pulpits, and a thousand speeches from our platforms. (Loud cheers.) Again, show me the Christian men who, unlike the archangels that cannot leave their thrones, may, if they will, relinquish, in a single hour, all their stations of dignity, all their offices of State, and all their high temporal prerogatives. Show me the Christian men, the praises of whose condition

resound through the annals of literature, ready to go forth, and on an errand of salvation ready to bend their lofty intellects to the capacities of the poor and illiterate. Show me the men, the fame of whose sacred eloquence never fails to attract overwhelming crowds of eager listeners, ready to go forth and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, though it might be in broken accents and a stammering tongue. Show me the men, the skill of whose statesmanship calls forth the plaudits of admiring senates, ready to go forth on the god-like embassy of causing the Indian, and the negro, and the rude barbarian, to know the Divine and glorious conquest once achieved on Calvary. Show me the men, whose brows are encircled with the mitre or the coronet, ready to cast both down at their Master's feet, and go forth into heathen lands, prepared to suffer and prepared to die, and in dying earn to themselves the nobler crown of martyrdom. Show me one and all of our loud-talking professors, from the peer of the realm down to the humblest pastor or member of a flock, not satisfied with reducing their services into the wretched inanity of an occasional sermon, or a speech easily pronounced and calling for no sacrifice. Show me one and all of these, joyfully prepared to respond to their Master's summons. And when the loud cry is raised, Who will march to the battlefield? who will go up to the help of the Lord against the mighty? let us hear the prompt and eager reply from a thousand voices, "Lord, here am I; send me." And I appeal to you as men and as Christians, whether examples like these of self-devotedness would not do a hundred times more to stir up the spirit of apostles and martyrs, that has been allowed to slumber for ages in their tombs, than thousands of sermons and thousands of speeches, though delivered in higher strains than ever angel sung. (Great applause.) But I shall be told I am now trespassing beyond the bounds of reason and sobriety, yea, that I am soaring on no waxen wings into the regions of wildest utopianism? What!—it will be said, and that too by numbers who make flaming professions of the name of Christ,—what! philosophers, and pulpit orators, and statesmen, and Lords spiritual, and Lords temporal, who reckon it no small stretch of magnanimity and condescension to take missionaries, who theoretically constitute the highest, but practically the lowest and most despised caste of Christian pastors, under the ample shield of their patronage and protection? What! expect them to descend from their eminences of honour, and go forth themselves, content with the humble fare, and arrayed in the humble attire of self-denying missionaries? Is not this the very climax of religious raving? Gracious God! and is it really so? Has it really come to this among the thousands that bend the knee to the name of Jesus, that the very proposal that they

should, one and all of them, be ready to imitate their Lord and Master, must be unceremoniously classed in the category of lunacy? And are we really bent on bringing heaven down to earth, instead of exalting earth to heaven? Are we in right earnest resolved to adjust the Divine standard of what ought to be, by the human standard of what *is*? Are we in sober seriousness determined to contract the calculus of eternity, within the narrow dimensions of the arithmetic of time? Do I now stand in an assembly of professing Christians? Well, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" It is the Man who is Jehovah's fellow. It is Immanuel, God with us. But who can pourtray the underived, the incomparable excellencies of Him, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily? In this contemplation we are at once lost in an unmeasurable ocean of overpowering glory. Imagination is bewildered; language fails. Go take a survey of the earth we dwell upon; collect every object and every quality that has been pronounced fair, sweet, or lovely; combine these into one resplendent orb of beauty: then leave the bounds of earth; wing your flight through the fields of immensity; in your progress collect what is fair and lovely in every world, what is bright and dazzling in every sun; combine these into other orbs of surpassing brightness, and thus continue to swell the number of magnificent aggregates, till the whole immense extent of creation is exhausted. And after having united these myriads of bright orbs into one glorious constellation, combining in itself the concentrated beauty and loveliness of the whole created universe, go and compare an atom to a world, a drop to the ocean, the twinkling of a taper to the full blaze of the noon-tide sun; and then may you compare even this all-comprehending constellation of beauty and loveliness with the boundless, the ineffable beauty and excellence of Him who is "The brightness of his Father's glory," who is "God over all, blessed for ever." And yet wonder, O heavens; and rejoice, O earth; this great, and mighty, and glorious Being did for our sakes condescend to veil his glory and appear on earth as a man of sorrows, whose visage was so marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men. Oh, is not this love! self-sacrificing love! love, that is "higher than the heights above, deeper than the depths beneath?" Oh, is not this condescension, self-sacrificing condescension, condescension without a parallel and without a name? God manifest in the flesh! God manifest in the flesh, for the redemption of a rebel race! Oh, is not this the wonder of a world? Is not this the astonishment of a universe? And in the view of love so ineffable, and condescension so unfathomable, tell me, oh, tell me, if it would seem aught so strange—I will

not say in the eye of poor, dim, beclouded humanity—but in the eye of that celestial hierarchy, that caused heaven's arches to ring with anthems of adoring wonder when they beheld the brightness of the Father's glory go forth eclipsed, mysteriously to sojourn on earth and tread the winepress alone, red in his apparel and his garments dyed in blood? Tell me, oh tell me, if in their cloudless vision it would seem aught so marvellous, so passing strange, did they behold the greatest and the mightiest of a guilty race, redeemed themselves at so vast a price, cheerfully prepared to relinquish their highest honours and fairest possessions, their loveliest academic bowers, and stateliest palaces; yea, did they behold Royalty itself retire and cast aside its robes of purple, its sceptre and its diadem, and issue forth in the footsteps of the Divine Redeemer into the waste, howling wilderness of sin, to seek and to save them that are lost? Ye grovelling sons of earth, call this fanaticism if you will; brand it as wild enthusiasm, I care not for the verdict. From you I appeal to the glorious sons of light, and ask, Was not this in principle the very enthusiasm of patriarchs, who rejoiced to see the day of Christ afar off, and were glad? Was not this the enthusiasm of prophets, whose harps, inspired by the mighty theme, were raised into strains of more than earthly grandeur? Was not this the enthusiasm of angels, that made the plains of Bethlehem ring with the jubilee of peace on earth and good-will to the children of men? Was not this the enthusiasm of apostles and martyrs, who gloried in the flames of the funeral pile as their most illustrious apparel? Was not this the enthusiasm (with reverence be it spoken), of the eternal Son of God himself, when he came forth travelling in the greatness of his strength to endure the agony of bloody sweat? And if this be enthusiasm, that is kindled by no earthly fire, and which when once kindled, burns without being consumed, how must the hopes of the Church lie sleeping in the tomb, where it does not exist! Oh, until a larger measure of this Divine enthusiasm be diffused through the Churches of Christendom, never, never, need we expect to realize the reign of millennial glory, when all nature shall once more be seen glorying in the first bloom of Eden, where one bond shall unite, and one feeling animate, all nations; where all kindreds, and tribes, and tongues, and people shall combine in one song, one universal shout of grateful "Hallelujah unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." (The Rev. Gentleman sat down amid the most tremendous cheers, which lasted several minutes.)